

Montague Historical Commission

Executive summary of MHC meetings on March 28 and March 31, 2022

**March 28, 2022 11:00-11:45 Special Meeting**

**Commissioners Present:**

David Brule

Chris Clawson

Ed Gregory

Suzanne LoMonto

Janel Nockleby

Chris Sawyer-Lauçanno

**Proceedings:**

1. This was a Special Meeting called for the purpose of coordinating and calibrating the Commissioners' understandings and consensus on the proposed demolition by-law, prior to hosing the public hearing on the by-law on March 31.
2. Welcomed Janel Nockleby, newly-appointed commissioner.
3. Discussion:
  - a. Chris Clawson and Ed Gregory seek more clarification to better understand the legal language used in the by-law.
  - b. Chris Sawyer-Lauçanno explains that Town counsel had vetted the wording and that it is now consistent with multiple other Demo by-laws accepted by the state Attorney General in 150 other communities.
  - c. CS-L advised against any significant change in wording. Notes that an summary of the by-law has been made available.
  - d. Both CC and EG are willing to support the wording, noting that there may be ambiguities that will need to be resolved later.
  - e. CS-L notes that the by-law will not likely affect the future of the Farren buildings given the time frame requirements for Town Meeting vote, and Attorney General review
4. The Commission voted unanimously to support the proposed by-law.

**March 31, 2022 Public Hearing on proposed demolition by-law.**

**Commissioners present:**

David Brule

Chris Clawson

Ed Gregory

Suzanne LoMonto

Janel Nockleby

Chris Sawyer-Lauçanno

**Members of the public:**

Mike Naughton

Jeff Singleton

Lilith Wolinsky

**Proceedings:**

1. Minutes of the February 24, 2022 MHC meeting voted and approved unanimously.
2. Public hearing on the proposed by-law opened at 11:02. Discussion:
  - a. MN questions why such a by-law is needed.
  - b. CS-L responds that there is a history of destruction of historic downtowns. This will protect historic buildings from arbitrary destruction.
  - c. MN asks if by-law would apply to private homes.
  - d. CS-L replies that this by-law rarely prevents the homeowner from making required changes.
  - e. LW: historic buildings currently have no options for protection.
  - f. JN notes that this by-law would have helped the Farren, and guided the Trinity ownership that didn't do what it promised the town to do.
  - g. CS-L notes the by-law will cause owners to seek other possibilities other than demolition. But lacking that, the building inspector could issue a demolition permit.
  - h. SLM notes the by-law is a commitment to process.
  - i. JN notes the Grand Trunk Hotel as a case in point. It could have forced closer examination of options to demolition. In addition, the MHC should look into other historic buildings that are not on the data base.
  - j. LW states that as a member of the public, she is in favor of the by-law and it should move forward.
  - k. Public hearing is closed at 11:55.
3. Other MHC business:
  - a. Discussion re Montague Center Library: costs of addressing building concerns. JS urges the commission to include the library on the April agenda and invite the Library Director.
  - b. Capital Improvement Committee: a function of Town Meeting, it reviews capital articles. MHC should provide input when actions involve historic buildings.
  - c. Town inventory of historic buildings: this involves listing of relevant buildings residing in historic districts. Noted that such an inventory involves considerable labor, time and cost. A starting point will be to locate the web link for the historic inventory, put it on MHC website.

4. Suggestions that a different time for meetings be determined: Resolved that for the time being the MHC will meet the last Monday in the month. Next meeting will be Monday April 25 at 11 AM.

Summary minutes submitted by D. Brule, Chairman